

In the claims:

Please amend the claims as follows:

1. (Currently Amended) An automated prescription dispensing system comprising:
a patient interface having a data interface configured for entering input information correlated to ~~the~~ a patient and a receptacle through which containers of medication ~~is~~ are dispensed;
a dispenser disposed in communication with the patient interface portion for holding and dispensing the containers of medication; and
a controller in communication with the dispensing portion for selectively controlling the dispensing ~~of medication disposed in the dispensing portion~~ from the dispenser of at least one of the containers of medication bearing prescription information unique to the patient.
2. (Original) The automated prescription dispensing system of claim 1, wherein the data interface comprises a keyboard.
3. (Original) The automated prescription dispensing system of claim 1, wherein the data interface comprises a magnetic card reader.
4. (Original) The automated prescription dispensing system of claim 1, wherein the patient interface further comprises a display screen.

5. (Original) The automated prescription dispensing system of claim 1, wherein the patient interface further comprises a speaker.

6. (Original) The automated prescription dispensing system of claim 1, wherein the patient interface further comprises a printer.

7. (Currently Amended) The automated prescription dispensing system of claim 1, wherein the dispenser comprises a plurality of medication receiving slots, at least one of the medication receiving structures holding a plurality of different containers of medication bearing prescription information corresponding to a plurality of prescriptions for the patient.

8. (Currently Amended) The automated prescription dispensing system of claim 7, wherein the dispenser comprises at least one separate door disposed adjacent each of the plurality of receiving slot for structures, each separate door selectively controlling access to one of the plurality of receiving structures ~~the passage of medication through the dispenser.~~

9. (Currently Amended) The automated prescription dispensing system of claim 8 7, wherein the ~~at least one door comprises for selectively preventing placement of medication into that receiving slot~~ dispenser comprises at least one separate door disposed adjacent each of the

plurality of receiving structures, each separate door controlling the passage of one or more of the containers of medication through the dispenser.

10. (Canceled)

11. (Currently amended) The automated prescription dispensing system of claim 7, further comprising ~~a plurality of~~ on or more sensors for determining the presence of one or more containers of medication within the plurality of receiving slots structures.

12. (Currently Amended) The automated prescription dispensing system of claim 7, wherein the controller is configured to track the location of the ~~patient's~~ containers of medication ~~disposed in one of the plurality of receiving slots by patient information and to dispense the~~ plurality of different containers of medication bearing prescription information upon input of information corresponding to the patient.

13. (Currently Amended) The automated prescription dispensing system of claim 1, wherein the ~~control~~ controller comprises a data interface for entering information about each ~~prescription~~ of the containers of medication loaded into the dispenser.

14. (Original) The automated prescription dispensing system of claim 13, wherein the data interface comprises a keyboard.

15. (Currently Amended) The automated prescription dispensing system of claim 13, wherein the ~~date~~ data interface comprises a scanner.

16. (Currently Amended) The automated prescription dispensing system of claim 1, wherein the controller comprises a processor programed to record information regarding the location of ~~medications~~ the containers of medication within the dispenser.

17. (Currently Amended) The automated prescription dispensing system of claim 1, wherein the controller further comprises a communications interface for ~~communicating with remote locations~~ facilitating communication between the dispensing system and external systems.

18. (Currently Amended) A method for automated prescription dispensing comprising:
filling a prescription by obtaining a container with medication therein and applying a label containing patient prescription information unique to a patient and thereby creating a labeled container corresponding to the prescription;

loading the ~~prescription~~ labeled container into a dispenser; and

dispensing the ~~prescription to the patient~~ labeled container from the dispenser in response to input of data correlated to the patient.

19. (Currently Amended) The method according to claim 18, wherein method comprises placing the ~~prescription~~ labeled container into a receiving slot structure of a dispenser having a ~~plurality of receiving slots~~ one or more receiving structures disposed therein.

20. (Currently Amended) The method according to claim 19, wherein the method comprises correlating a receiving slot structure in which the ~~prescription~~ labeled container is placed with information regarding the patient prior to dispensing of the labeled container.

21. (Currently Amended) The method according to claim 20, further comprising releasing the ~~prescription~~ labeled container from a receiving structure in the dispenser in response to input of data correlated to the patient.

22. (Currently Amended) The method accord to claim 18, wherein the method comprises dispensing the ~~prescription after the patient has entered a personal identification number~~ labeled container from the dispenser following entry into the dispensing of information confirming identity of the patient.

23. (Currently Amended) A method for dispensing medication from a dispenser having a ~~plurality of receiving slots~~ one or more receiving structures, the method comprising:

~~opening an available receiving slot;~~

inputting information regarding a prescription;

disposing a container corresponding to the prescription in an available one of the receiving slot structures, the container bearing prescription information unique to a patient;

~~closing the receiving slot inhibiting access to the available one of the receiving structures;~~ and

dispensing the ~~prescription container~~ from the available one of the receiving slot to a structures in response to entry into the dispenser of information associated with the patient.

24. - 27. (Canceled)

28. (Currently Amended) A method for ~~billing prescriptions~~ effecting retail transactions involving a prescription, the method comprising:

filling a the prescription, including producing a lebled container by labeling a container of medicine with prescription information unique to a patient;

loading the ~~prescription~~ labeled container into an automated dispensing system;

dispensing the ~~prescription to a patient~~ labeled container from the automated dispensing system in response to input into the dispensing system of information correlated to the patient; and

~~generating a bill responsive to~~ sending billing information to an entity external to the automated dispensing systems in response to dispensing of the prescription labeled container.

29. (Currently Amended) A method for more efficiently filling prescriptions, the method comprising:

~~collecting~~ receiving information for a ~~plurality of~~ one or more prescriptions at a central processing location;

filling the prescriptions, including producing one or more labeled containers by applying patient uniquely corresponding to the one or more prescriptions to one or more containers; and

transporting the ~~prescriptions to a plurality of local pharmacies~~ one or more labeled containers to one or more dispensing locations; and

placing the one or more labeled containers in one or more dispensing machines disposed at the one or more dispensing locations.

30. (Currently Amended) The method according to claim 29, wherein the method comprises receiving prescription information at ~~local pharmacies~~ the one or more dispensing locations and relaying the information to the central processing location.

31. (Original) The method according to claim 29, wherein the method comprises organizing the prescriptions into groups based on the medication prescribed and filling the prescriptions by group.

32. (Currently Amended) The method according to claim 29, further comprising loading ~~the prescriptions~~ certain of the one of more labeled containers into an automated dispensing system ~~at the local pharmacy~~ one of the dispensing locations.

33. (New) A method for automated prescription dispensing comprising:
filling a plurality of prescriptions for a patient wherein each of the prescriptions is filled using one or more containers of medication bearing prescription information unique to the patient;
loading one or more containers of medication into a receiving structure of a dispensing system; and
dispensing the one or more containers of medication in response to input into the dispensing system of date correlated to the patient.

34. (New) The method according to claim 33, wherein the method further comprises using a sensor to ensure that all of the one or more containers in the receiving structure were dispensed.

35. (New) The method according to claim 33, wherein the method comprises having a door which selectively restricts access to the one or more containers of medication in the receiving structure and selectively allows access to the one or more containers of medication from the receiving structure.

36. (New) A method for dispensing medication from a dispensing system having one or more receiving structures, the method comprising:

selecting a first receiving structure from among the one or more receiving structures;

placing at least a first container containing a first medication prescribed for a first patient in the first receiving structure wherein the first container bears first one prescription information unique to the first patient; and

dispensing the first container from the first receiving structure in response to entry into the dispensing system of information associated with the first patient.

37. (New) The method for dispensing medication according to claim 36, wherein the method further comprises:

selecting a second receiving structure;

disposing at least a second container containing a second medication prescribed for a second patient in the receiving structure wherein the second container bears second prescription information unique to the second patient; and

dispensing the second container from the second receiving structure upon entry into the dispensing system of additional information associated with the second patient.

38. (New) The system according to claim 4, further including means for displaying a message upon the display screen which is associated with the at least one of the containers of medication.

39. (New) The method according to claim 36, further comprising providing a message correlated to the first prescription in connection with the dispensing of the first container.

40. (New) The method according to claim 37, wherein the method further comprises:
placing a third container containing a third medication prescribed for the first patient in the first receiving structure wherein the third container bears third prescription information unique to the first patient; and
dispensing the third container from the first receiving structure to the first patient.

41. (New) The automated prescription dispensing system of claim 1 wherein the dispenser comprises a plurality of medication receiving structures, the dispensing system further including memory for recording at least a portion of the prescription information so as to establish an association between one or more of the medication receiving structures and the patient.

42. (New) The automated prescription dispensing system of claim 9, wherein each at

least one separate door additionally comprises a dispensing door for selectively permitting access to certain of the ones of the containers of medication within a corresponding one of the receiving structures.

43. (New) The automated prescription dispensing system of claim 1 wherein the dispenser comprises a plurality of medication receiving structures, the dispenser further comprising a first door disposed adjacent each receiving structure for selectively preventing placement of ones of the containers of medication into corresponding ones of the receiving structures and a second door disposed adjacent each receiving structure for selectively permitting dispensing of ones of the containers of medication from corresponding ones of the receiving structures.

44. (New) The automated prescription dispensing system of claim 1, wherein the prescription information includes a name of the patient.

45. (New) A method for automated prescription dispensing comprising:
holding a plurality of containers of medication within a plurality of medication receiving structures;
receiving input information correlated with a patient; and

dispensing at least one of the plurality of containers from one of the plurality of medication receiving structures wherein the at least one of the containers bears prescription information unique to the patient.

46. (New) The method according to claim 45, further comprising establishing an association between one or more of the medication receiving structures and the patient.

47. (New) A method for dispensing medication from a dispenser having a plurality of receiving structures, the method comprising:

receiving, at the back side of an available receiving structure, a container of medication bearing prescription information unique to a patient;

receiving the prescription information and establishing an association between the receiving structure and the patient; and

dispensing the container of medication from a front side of the receiving structure.

48. (New) A method for conducting a retail transaction involving a prescription, the method comprising:

filling the prescription;

loading a container of medication bearing prescription information unique to a patient into an automated dispensing system;

dispensing the container of medication in response to input information correlated to the

patient; and

completing a retail transaction responsive to dispensing of the container of medication.

49. (New) The method according to claim 28, further including interfacing with an external system responsive to dispensing of the labeled container, thereby completing the retail transaction.

50. (New) A method for dispensing medication from a dispensing system having a plurality of receiving structures, the method comprising:

disposing a container corresponding to a prescription in an available one of the receiving structures, the container bearing prescription information and a bar code unique to a patient;

reading the bar code and storing information relating to the bar code within memory of the dispensing system; and

dispensing the container from the available one of the receiving structures in response to entry into the dispensing system of information associated with the patient.

51. (New) The method of claim 50, further including sensing the presence of the container disposed within the available one of the receiving structures.

52. (New) The method of claim 50, further including inhibiting access to the available one of the receiving structures.

53. (New) The method of claim 50, wherein an association is maintained within the memory between the information relating to the bar code and the available one of the receiving structures.

54. (New) The method of claim 28 further including providing an indication of an amount payable to a user of the automated dispensing system.

55. (New) The method of claim 28 wherein the entity external to the automated dispensing system comprises an insurance company.

56. (New) The method of claim 28 wherein the entity external to the automated dispensing system comprises a financial institution with which a user of the automated dispensing system has an account.

57. (New) The system according to claim 4, further including means for generating an audio message associated with the at least one of the containers of medication.

58. (New) The method according to claim 39, wherein the message is displayed upon a display screen.

59. (New) The method according to claim 39, wherein the message comprises an audio message.